

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Sunnyside Champaign Dispensary Workers Ratify their Union Contract!**

*Local 881 successfully negotiates it's third cannabis union contract.*

**Champaign, IL** – Cannabis workers at the Sunnyside in Champaign voted to ratify their first Cannabis Union contract on January 20, 2022. Sunnyside is owned and operated by the large and profitable national cannabis company, Cresco. The 22 dispensary workers are represented by Local 881, of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, the Union for Cannabis Workers in Illinois. **This is the third Local 881 union contract ratified by Illinois cannabis workers, in just two years since legalization.**

Sunnyside Champaign workers began organizing to join the Local 881 union in March 2021. The workers were motivated to improve their working conditions, citing issues at the dispensary such as low wages, inadequate benefits, unpredictable scheduling of hours, and no proper training. An overwhelming majority of the dispensary workers voted to join Local 881 on June 17, 2021.

The Sunnyside Champaign workers were united in their desire and fight to make their cannabis industry jobs real careers. After months of negotiations, Local 881 was successful in negotiating a contract that addressed many of the workers concerns, including annual wage increases, a ratification bonus, guaranteed PTO schedule with Wellness Days added, a set employee product discount, and a robust grievance procedure to dispute discipline.

“It feels great to finally have a contract! Unionizing has been a long process, but it absolutely paid off. We now have a contract that was drafted with the help of employee representatives, and the staff at Sunnyside Champaign were able to make their voices heard by voting yes,” remarked Sarah Holder, Sunnyside Champaign Wellness Advisor. **“The fact that we helped set the terms of our employment really brings a sense of ownership and job security that was previously missing. It feels amazing knowing that Local 881 is on our side!”**

“There’s no doubt in my mind that dispensary workers are more passionate about the cannabis plant than anyone that works in the corporate office. **Some of us have been handling and learning about this plant for longer than Cresco has been a company.** We are the ones with the cannabis knowledge and the know-how. We are bringing the customers back every week, not company sales or ads. We are a huge part of this industry, and we deserve representation and to be treated fairly,” explained Ramy Akram-Ahmed, a Sunnyside Champaign Wellness Advisor. “Working with Local 881 has helped us to learn about what’s possible and about what we deserve. We now have representation that has our best interests in mind. **After months and months of negotiations, it’s exciting that all the hard work that went into this contract has come to fruition. I hope that along with improving the conditions at our store, this contract also benefits the entire industry and many other cannabis workers.**”

“More and more cannabis workers are learning the hard truth that cannabis corporations will choose profit over their people every time. At the same time, they are also realizing that **the secure path to a real cannabis career is not through empty employer promises, but rather by standing up as a united group of workers with a strong Union on your side,**” said Steven Powell, President, Local 881 UFCW. “Local 881 is thrilled to welcome the Sunnyside Champaign dispensary workers into our union family and we consider it a great privilege to be their representatives, we look forward to holding their employer accountable and enforcing their contract.

Cannabis workers across the state are joining with Local 881 to make meaningful change to the cannabis industry in Illinois. Local 881 is committed to ensuring that the cannabis industry lives up to the promises it made to the communities when it lobbied for their support for legalization. **Local 881 is proud to be the only union with ratified cannabis contracts in Illinois,** representing the Cresco cultivation center in Joliet and Sunnyside Dispensaries in Chicago-Lakeview and Champaign. For more information about the fight to improve the cannabis industry in Illinois, visit: [ILCannabisWorkersUnited.org](http://ILCannabisWorkersUnited.org).

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